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By W. G. HOLE

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THE CHAINED TITAN

A POEM OF YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

BY

W. G. HOLE

LONDON

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1910

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TO THE MEMORY OF

JOHN BART ROUS

M.B., B.Sc.

ASSISTANT EDITOR OF THE "LANCET,"

WHO DIED WHILE THESE PAGES WERE

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THE AUTHOR OWES MUCH.

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ERRATA

Page 52, line 26, *for* weak *read* wreak.
Page 76, line 7, *for* was *read* were.

THE CHAINED TITAN

PROLOGUE

THE ARGUMENT

A MODERN pilgrim who finds himself at a little sea-port on the Greek coast rows out alone to watch the sunset. As a social worker he has become familiar at home with the terrible results of destitution and over-crowding in our large cities, and haunting thoughts of these and other evils, apparently irremediable, which are mainly caused by our present economic conditions, mar his enjoyment of the splendour of the evening skies.

I from my boat, heedless of wind and tide,
Had watched the sun descend conflagrant skies
And phoenix-like upon the ocean rim
Consumed in his own splendour. Ghostlike now
Out from amidst the glooming Cyclades,
From darkening channels and the purple lee
Of fading headlands stole the shadowy troops
Of night across the waters. One by one
The stars, let down by unseen ministrants,
Swung steadying gently in the amber dome,
And still I mused rocked by the rhythmic swell
Of rollers blundering shoreward drowsed with sleep.
My part had ever been with them who watch
As audience that unceasing comedy
Which has for chorus dim, gray multitudes
That cross the stage of life behind all show
Of tragic splendour, wrath, ambition, love,
Chained each to each in one same misery,
As file past kings in hushed Egyptian tombs,
With hands in futile supplication raised,

A conquered folk that bear upon their backs
The victor's spoils plundered from their own homes.
  Then came a time when as I watched the play
And judged the actors, liberal with applause
Or condemnation, from the chorus came
A sudden voice of anguish: so might cry
A swimmer weakening in the sinuous grasp
Of pitiless currents; so at midnight, too,
Might misery call aloud denied redress
In cities ripe for judgment.
                Face by face
I scanned the chorus, for a grief so great
Must needs make some betrayal of him who cried,
But shrank aghast to find the eyes of all
Haunted by such disaster that the lips
Of each might well have shaped that bitter cry.
  This once observed, that seeming comedy
Became confused, lost all significance:
Spectators, actors, chorus, all alike
Moving across the stage with equal steps;
To none allotted loftier part or place
Than in the chorus of a play too great
For mortal comprehension—those in gangs
With fettered hands and dull despairing eyes;
And these not as those others are—ourselves
Who truly yet, for all our pride, are bound
Of soul as they of limb.

Wherefore I fled
From daily touch with men whose cries go up
From deeps of misery where a poisoned yeast
Works which of yore was hope. To dream of these,
Drifting at sunset on the calm Aegaean
Where Freedom first shot up the foam-white bloom
That bleeding lips kissed red; where ships of pine
With many oars on great adventures sailed,
Foredoomed and unforgettable!
Enough!
I had no purpose save maybe to lull
Too clamant griefs in the large neighbourhood
Of great indifferent things—seas, mountains, wastes,
Wild dawns and dreamy sunsets; nor desire
For aught save that untroubled I might drift
To some lone isle of mystical resort,
Embraced by languid seas whereon the stars,
Recalled from convocation in the vast
Of purple space, rain down the long night through
Pale largesses of light.
There in still aisles
Of trees columnar with the organ notes
Of night among their branches, would I roam;
Nor look for morning; nor feel weariness;
Nor wish for aught except to be by time
Unvexed, and for that perfect hour to stay
Till I myself should speed it; and at eve

Soft music should beset me—take my soul
With the dear ecstasy of strange remorse
For joy let slip and love too loosely held—
Struck forth from cithern strings by the white hands
Of women with the world's grief in their eyes,
And quiver of passionate question on their lips:
All in my dream and of my dream a part,
And at my will to cease.
Also at dawn—
And dawn should come, flushing the skies with joy,
Across the eastward waters to this isle,
As speeds a happy bridegroom to his bride—
I would not think of any other dawn,
Nor call to mind the bitter cry once heard
Of them whose lives are darkened.

* * * * * * * * *

BOOK I

THE ARGUMENT

THE Pilgrim is roused from reverie by a series of strange apparitions on the sea. His boat drifts into a deep, rocky bay. Landing he encounters a man whom he recognizes as Hermes, and by him is conducted up a steep path towards the interior. The Song of Hermes (p. 12). They reach a wild mountain valley. Here the Pilgrim distinguishes in the dark a vast concourse of shadowy beings—the Gods and Titans of the ancient world summoned thither by Chaos. Chaos discourses on the signs of the times (p. 16) and comforts his adherents with assurances and proofs of the growing degeneracy of the human race.

Starting up,
I saw within the gloom, for night had fallen,
Gestation strange and terrible whereby
Were shadows wrought to shapes of dreadful menace;
And down upon me bore with thrash and thrust
Of swift pursuit a fleet of huge triremes,
Beaks forward craned snuffing the air for war.
From where I crouched I watched their fighting-tops
Glide by; heard harsh commands which on the night
Fell like a whip's sharp crack, and smelt the stench
Of sweat from crowded benches as they passed
Ploughing, maybe, seas of eternal night,
And held to some dark purpose of ambition
By one stern soul who, baulked and smitten down
Upon the eve of empire, still denied
To death his last submission.
Having passed,
Behind them like a curtain dropped the night;
But while their wash yet bickered round my boat,
And still their widening wake across the sea
Seemed like a road where under countless feet
Darkness was trod to dust, far down astern
Appeared against the dull horizon break,

Like to a huge, gray moth with wings outspread,
A Tyrian trader, bales upon her deck
Piled hazardous. Yet more than trader she,
Her full square sail—a standard of advance
Borne proudly through the night from shores of dawn—
Was tense with all the blind and brave resolves
Of man's young spirit, gathering in its growth
New strength for further venture—daring new
From dangers dared.
The waves unused to curb,
Aghast at this disturber of their realm,
Hushed at her passing then made quick resume
Of secret whisperings, laughter, strange reports;
Till sudden silence fell and I, alarmed,
Sprang to my feet peering this way and that:
"He comes!" sea-voices cried, then held their peace;
And then again, with dull reiterancy,
"He comes!" whereon with sudden, fearful sense
Of homage claimed by majesty I, too,
In subject key, "Poseidon passes by!"
As harsh, barbaric music clashed and roared:
Sharp-smitten cymbals, flutings and the bray
Of pink-flushed shell or wrinkled narwhal horn
Pressed to a merman's lips; while round me rose
With sudden upthrust through the heaving smooth,
And noiseless save for water scuppering off
Blunt nose and glistening shoulder, monster shapes—

Lords of the deep-sea slime—who sought to greet
The great Poseidon.
Strange diffuse of light
Made visible the indifferent deity
Drawn in a lofty car by dolphin steeds,
His sea-blue chlamys, dyed in the still vats
Of ocean calms, astream upon the wind;
While through the churn of waves on either hand
Gleamed limbs of ivory white, and the red gold
Of tresses tossed and blown, with endless din
Of challenge, shout and laughter. So they passed;
And down the roaring slope of that huge trough
Which followed in their wake, through imminent lanes
And dusks of toppling spray, my little boat
Shot quivering till confused I felt the keel
Grate on a shingly beach, and saw ahead
Uplift of rock eclipsing half the stars;
And heard about me tossed in tiny bays
And sorrowing on the edge of unseen reefs
The shoreward run of waves.
The inward curve
Of cliff hard by was rent from brow to base,
And tumbling through the gash a little stream
That all night long had sung among the hills
And whispered to the woods of freedom near,
Seemed on a sudden by the great sea faced
To dwindle into silence. Stunted shrubs

Grew close about the beach and threading these
A man drew near whose more than mortal height
I marked with terror till his voice, attuned
It seemed to unheard music, calmed my fears:
"Since you can see and hear me yours awhile
Is privilege to follow in my steps
And comprehend the speech of that gray world
To which this pathway leads."
This said, he turned,
I following close, and climbed a mountain track
Through windless glooms, and as moved he sang:

The world we loved is filled with pain,
And Life that should ere this have come
To ripe, strong manhood seeks in vain
Its crown through fruitless martyrdom;
Smoke, not of hearths, pollutes the air,
The days are but for labour meet,
While in the paths we trod Despair
Shuffles with night about her feet.

But what if now no earthly light
Finds way between our prison bars,
Nor even shine on us at night
The uncompanionable stars!
My dreams assure me that to-day
The world is lovely as of old
Though cheerless hearts behold it gray,
And grasping hands let slip its gold.

And that if on your gloomiest ways
I sped once more about the earth,
On every hand would meet my gaze
Indignant joys demanding birth;
But ye, alas! if raising head,
Rebellious, ye should seek relief
In one poor joy—too quickly sped,
Its memory is your greatest grief.

While I—no cause have I to grieve
For oft in dream my spirit fares
Earthward on careless wings that cleave
Unseen of men, the morning airs;
I skim above the summer meads
That ring with laughter, merry cries;
I reap delights that no man heeds
And waste them ere the glamour dies.

Yea, for an earthly lover's hour,
What time the day-star slowly dips,
I, laughing, steal the matchless flower
That blooms upon a maiden's lips.
Then, once more on my errand sped,
Asleep beneath me slides Cathay,
Until I meet with banners spread
The dawn upon its westward way.

One race of old we deemed our kin
Whose hearts, grown rich in wise employ
And ever unself-suspect of sin,
Were pure and therefore meet for joy;

And as men careless gifts bestow
On youth for sheer delight in youth,
We gave to them to see and know
In temporal things eternal truth.

They lived—their life of generous scope
Lay not coin-rounded in their palms;
They loved—embraced no phantom hope
Nor troubled if their bread were alms;
Till in their souls a god-like grace
And beauty came at last to birth,
And heaven's full splendour lit their face
Because their joy was of the earth.

Mark well! in this lugubrious night
Awaiting, too, the sons of earth,
The joys of life and love and light
Are seen to be of priceless worth.
What if with tears too late ye find
That those small coins of joy your pride,
Seeking so much, with scorn declined,
Had served to purchase all beside!

Here came his song to end and deeper hush
And darkness more profound fell on the night;
But still he hurried on, mounting the slope
With easy strides, I following in his steps
In silence till amazed I chanced to see
Strange shadows as of wings about his feet:

"Hermes!" I cried, "is so great honour mine?"
Whereat he turned and smiled but held his peace.
The path now crossed a desolation roughed
With boulders, ploughed by winter torrents, cracked
And scorched by pitiless suns. Near by a host
Of bearded pines involved in spectral gray,
Earthward adventuring from some upper world,
Stood ranked upon the slope each whispering low
Of midnight storm and past calamity.
Sounds as of leaves wind-driven through autumn woods,
And sense of words withheld and gestures checked,
Troubled the ghostly air at my approach;
While like to a smitten string the steadfast earth
Thrilled to slow, nearing thunder. In the gloom
Took shape about me shadowy, giant forms—
Anarchs of night and figures darkly crowned:
One at my hand of sombre majesty
Whose features spoke command, with eyes no less
The haunt of all despair, and close-pressed lips
Imprisoning grief incurable. Near stood,
Gracious amid ungracious circumstance,
And lovely still in that deflowering gloom,
The queen of heaven not yet nor evermore
Less queen at heart than when the plains of Troy
Shuddered beneath the rush of chariot wheels
And clash of battle; and of no less note
Others whose knowledge, power to loose and bind,

Huge might and vast command of mortal fear
Availed them nothing in the dreadful hour
Which saw their empire challenged.
Then my ear
Distinguished in the thunder labouring words:
"This still upon you all do I impose:
Patience and once again but patience. Yea,
Although the smoke of sacrifice no more
Proclaims our worship, men's affrighted hearts
Have changed no whit with change of sovereignty.
But wherefore re-awaken you to sense
Of unavenged defeat? To bid you thus
Have patience? Nay, not so. To stir your wrath
With memory of your wrongs lest in your sleep
Your tribulations fade and ye, released
From bonds of woe with me, should haply yield
Allegiance all unwitting to another?
Nay, not that either, nor do I begrudge
The deep forgetfulness I may not share—
I who, denied all refuge from my grief,
Must needs abide and see him whom I hate—
My pitiless foe—by constant victory crowned:
The constant victory of incredible pain
Endured; and know him, though with bloody beak
Anguish for ever tears his living heart,
Unmastered still and still, so great his pride,
Unmoved and unelate at my abasement.

Mark! in the world change works unceasingly:
Now gently, now with such resistless rage
As swept us nightward. Notwithstanding this,
The laws we knew, their roots set fast in things
Beneath all fluctuation, still persist,
And so persisting keep for our return
The old roads open. Ye on whom our realm
Devolved in turn, through this same change, as we,
Feared but for danger from your likes—the power
That wields our sceptre now, in shadowy fight
Is baffled by the indifferent hearts of men;
And therein lies our hope: men dream of rule,
And dreaming so their daring waxes great;
They would be gods—the human in them irks;
They grasp at mastery greater than was ours,
And so of their own prompting choose the path
Which leads them back to that from which they came.
Death at their hands hampered by new restraint,
Sullen, perplexed, even now grows hungry—raves
For rich strong life denied; Pestilence, Plague,
Falter and languish, baffled where ever of old
They found the walls unguarded; Famine, too,
Once horribly assured now seldom dogs
The heels of victory but, hungry-pale,
Must needs attend the beast, black Poverty—
The chiefest of my servants—and await
The chance to snatch from out his wasting clutch

A victim here and there.
To one same end
By many ways therefore do all things move!
Ye see mankind disastrously increased,
Unpurged and healthless grown, fondling the beast
That weak as yet shall in the end destroy them;
While Anarchy and Hate in sober guise
Prophesy largely to deluded ears.
Soon, since the same black welter claims the whole,
The potent One shall cease to make the All
The stronger for his strength, and none shall climb
To any height of mastery or trace
With lonely daring paths for feebler feet;
Whence, hands no longer left to their device
And genius barred from all high exercise,
The head of ruthless waters welled from deeps
Unsealed of old by me and curbed so long
By mortal will, at last shall burst its banks
And sweep away the patient gains of men.
And we—not worthless jetsam flung by storm
On this wild foreshore of unmeasured time—
We here await the slow returning tide
To bear us back to greatness as of yore.
The waves have not forgot us—their pale crests
Foam shoreward and the silver tide creeps up;
The salt wind stings old forces from their sleep;
Murmur and muffled roar bring from the main

Rumours of ebb at end and flow begun;
Afar is heard the summons of the storm,
The call of wild, wide seas, and I, a wreck,
A stranded argosy with gaping seams
And started mast, shout from the idle strand
High challenge and, undaunted, bid them haste.
Therefore, great souls! (no lesser for defeat
And from your purpose undeflected yet)
That ye can thus respond, and my distress
Find solace in the sight of gods who shared
The glory of my prime, is not for naught.
We part, then, strong in hope: ye to the caves
Of old forgetfulness—I to the prison
Of unbarred air and solitary waste,
Held by that power whose is the mountain weight
Of things accomplished till the fateful wheel
Shall speed revolve to that which needs must be."

BOOK II

THE ARGUMENT

CHAOS having concluded, the shadows vanish. Hearing a cry of distress in the far distance, the Pilgrim hurries up alone in the direction from which the sound came and reaches a wild ravine where the moon, rising behind the mountain ridge, gradually reveals a huge figure chained high up on the rock-wall over against him. This he recognizes as Prometheus still enduring the cruel punishment inflicted upon him long ages ago by Zeus.

He ceased, whereat awoke within the night
And died away dull clamourings, faint applause,
As though the voice, departing, in its train
Dragged all inferior sound and left the air
Inagitate and noiseless; till at last
The stream awaking from untroubled sleep,
With liquid whisperings brought the hush to end.
Yet was the darkness no obscuring gloom
But rather a dull glass through which were seen,
Piled up about the valley, crag on crag
With splintered shoulders fiercely interlocked;
And high above, indomitably reared,
Peak beyond peak, against the downward droop
Of quiet nightly stars.
Then far away
Sounded a lonely voice as of despair
Waking once more to knowledge of itself
With none to heed its weakness, and the cry
So roused compassion in me that with thought
To succour or console, I straightway climbed
The wild, storm-wasted steeps and gained at length
A gorge as deep as any by earthquake riven

Or flawed by central fires or split by ice
Across the rugged spine of Caucasus.
Therein the silence was of sound suppressed—
Breath held in agony—and, at a loss,
I watched the moon, late risen in lonely skies,
O'er-peep the crested mountain range and tip
The opposing scarp with light that, inch by inch
Descending, made reveal of splintered shelf
And plunge of wind-worn cliff till, mid-way down,
Behold! close in against the rugged sheer,
Hanging unmoved, a snow-white dome of cloud
Beneath whose tumbled pent in gradual growth
A giant face came slowly into sight
Of godlike beauty—none the less despoiled
In human wise by griefs and long despairs—
Which yet, so large was it and so remote,
Seemed in the strange, illusive play of light
Like to a perished sun uprising pale
From seas of night and death.
Now as the moon
Climbed slowly and as slowly ebbed the dark
In cold surrender yielding shoulders, breast,
All monstrous yet proportioned; so my mind
Lost power of curious question and I stood
Awed by mysterious sense of walls thrown down
That narrow space to time; of limits burst
And all experience voided, for I knew,

Yet knew not how I knew, that as it seemed
So, truly, was the thing I looked upon;
Further, that more than that as yet perceived
Was still to see, wherefore with closer gaze
I, unsurprised, discovered rustless chains,
Clamped to the living rock, that web-like crossed
And crossed and crossed again his naked form—
A form gigantic such as men of old
Fabled of Titan birth. . . . Of Titan birth!
Was, then, that story of aforetime true
How one regardless of his high estate,
Impassionate of pity, love-inspired,
Had climbed the steeps of heaven and from its place—
Yea, from beside the very hand of Jove—
Had stolen the fire with which to light the paths
Of men through bestial wilds; and how he thus
Had suffered punishment; that this, indeed,
Was one who, barred from all release by death,
Had borne for men an ageless martyrdom—
The great Prometheus!
When from him at last
I turned my wondering eyes the moon full-risen,
Flooding the gorge from end to end with light,
Had given to view, crouched humbly at the foot
Of that huge rock whereon the Titan hung,
A daughter of the elder gods in whom
No whit the less for her gigantic build

The gentlest charm of mortal womanhood
Eluded as it lured. She conscious soon
Of my amazed regard rose to her feet
And turned with gracious question, "Art thou one
Of them for whom we look?"
Such was the grief
Haunting her speech—for her immortal woe
Knew not man's mournful salve: forgetfulness—
That words which needs had been her hope's denial
Failed on my lip; and she, gainsaid no less
By silence, with the pitiful majesty
Of things forlorn too gentle for revolt,
Resumed her watch. At this, as though recalled
From some far backward dream, regarding her
The Titan's face lit tenderly, and thus
"Didst thou see aught?" he asked, "Didst thou hear
aught?
I saw thee start from out thy long despair
And turn thy face."
Then she: "Yea, lord, I heard
Sounds as of footsteps. I have heard them oft
Climbing up from the world and drawing near. . . .
I did but dream . . . as I have dreamt before."
"What are thy dreams, then, Panthea?"
"I once heard
A voice that questioned, mocked and spoke of thee,
Daring my faith with doubts and I. . . . I shamed

My heart by listening. . . . Thus the mocking voice:
'What can avail Prometheus now or thee
Or them for whom he suffered? That great power
Whose wrath he dared vexes the world no more;
Why scorns he, then, the dull relief of time?
Awaits he greater end than to step down
And walk away and be no more a thing
For gaze and wonder? Does he first demand
Rapt worship, hot discipleship from men
Too long forgetful of his ancient fame?
And if not so . . . Prometheus waits for . . . what?'
This is the question asked and asked again;
How shall I answer it, Prometheus, how?"
The Titan spake no word, at which with hands
Clasped on her bosom, she: "Forgive me, lord,
I know not what I would!" then bowed her head,
Smitten to tears. I, seeing response withheld
And moved by her distress, cried, "Art thou, then,
Great soul, too great for such a thing as love?
And dost thou not, indeed, refuse her alms—
A small poor alms—because thou art thyself
Denied fruition, not because the lack
Makes gifts impossible?" then struck with fear
Of what might thence befall me slipt away
And hid amongst the boulders.
There the gloom
Seemed charged with subtle power to free the spirit

So from the bonds of time that in the deed
It knew the eternal doing; thus, though aware
That but a step beyond the shade and lo!
The earthquake-riven gorge, the moment's point
Of martyrdom, I saw with dreamy sense
Of days re-summoned—long dead things recalled—
A world, untrafficked yet and bathed in light,
Still quivering to the soft awakening touch
Of primal dawn. Deep clustering forests clung
Like clouds about the lower mountain slopes,
And to their bosoms snatched and soothed with songs
The streams that, silver-glancing, fled the hush
Of lonely glacier wastes. In the deep vales,
Till noonday sunless, lurked the sweet allure
Of virgin silence; and, as yet unwooed,
Rich plains afar awaiting husbandry
Slept opulent beneath a shimmering haze.
  Here walked through forest ways and pleasant meads
The careless easy gods who took from men—
From men with earth-stained hands and joyless eyes—
A wasting tribute; gods to whom was given
High dominance of earth and sea and sky;
For whom were reared on immemorial heights
White, pillared temples lovely as the clouds
Isled in the April azure, and hushed fanes
Oracular in haunted forest deeps.
These in their generation ruled the world,

And ruled it for themselves, wherefore arose
Huge strife, and joy which was the end of all
Became the prize of none, while Fate, unmoved,
Watched the slow falling of the measured sands.
  Yet all was narrowed as I looked on it
To one vast comedy of splendid pride
Wherein the actors played their old-time parts;
And on me fell familiar, troubling sense
Of gathering evil as across the stage
That chorus moved again—gray multitudes
Of dim, pathetic shapes with graphic show
Of pain and hopelessness.

BOOK III

THE ARGUMENT

THE incidents which resulted in the chaining of Prometheus to the rock are vividly presented to the Pilgrim's mind: how pitying the sufferings of mankind he climbed to the high city of the gods and stole the divine fire; how he gave the fire to men on condition that all without distinction should be permitted to use it, and how the gods revenged themselves upon him.

Then while my mind
Dwelt on the old discovery that the gods
Threw shadow in no whit diverse from men's,
Given the sun and power to stand in it,
On that oft witnessed play the curtain fell
Of swift dream change: the mountains disappeared
And lo! a hollow vast of tranquil sky
So deep, so lonely, and so vaguely filled
With haunting sense of dreams impossible,
That gazing forth my disconcerted soul
Knew mutinous sadness and the fierce remorse
Of powers frustrated, as a lark that finds
His cage door open, fluttering to the ledge,
Falters at sight of that whereof the dream
Had kept his eager spirit unenslaved.
A world-wide plain of purple-patterned sea,
With pearl-gray calms, blanched serpentining seams
And wind-roughed spaces, lay so far below
That round the foot of that high, jutting cape
Whereon I stood the surge made soundless storm;
While on the sea's far verge range beyond range
Of summer clouds tumultuously piled

Lifted their burnished bulks and in the blue
Gleamed with an awful purity—remote
As the white ice-pack of the guarded pole.
  Yet with the joy of one to whom a peak
Shouts mocking challenge ever, up those wild steeps
My eye traced paths of possible ascent:
Through vales of shattered pearl here bridged and there
By purple driftage; through involved ravines
Of violet shadow; up long slopes of snow
Brushed smooth by silver winds, and on beside
The gleaming plunge of mountain cataracts
With all their roar arrested in mid-air,
To that huge waste and wilderness of crags—
Sheer precipice piled up on precipice
And boulders toppling that were yet withheld—
From out whose midst in lonely majesty
Uprose the central peak. This, soaring, vast—
A cold, white splendour—alien seemed to aught
Of earthly contact, yet about its crest
Was plain the fold and wind of city walls
With deep embattled ports and flanking towers,
And out-thrust bartizans that overhung
The blue profound. Within their cincture rose
A lustrous climb of roofs, high temples, towers,
Facades and cupolas and, crowning all,
Be-rimmed with silver flame, a snow-white dome
That, though firm-built, against the blue appeared

Ever to change in shape while, clearly seen,
Upon its topmost gallery, chin on palm
And elbow leaning on the balustrade—
The constant wind that blows through measureless space
Rippling the golden edge of his bright plumes—
A radiant form that musing overbent
The world outspread below.
Along the walls
Paced sentries to and fro whose silver helms
Made points of ardent flame what time they passed
And, craning forth with eyes indignant, scanned
The tumbled steep where never climber dared,
As though invasion threatened. Now to me
Was plain at times a hurrying form that scaled
The adventurous upward path my eye had traced,
Baffling with quick resort, elusive guile,
The anxious watchers. Him nor fathomless gulf
Nor over-jutting crag availed to check
As, cautious now, and now with stooping rush,
He made persistent way where no way seemed,
And gaining unobserved the shadowy pent
Of those celestial bastions, won at last,
Climbing with balanced reach and breathless lift,
An arch-browed loop-hole facing on the vast
Of northern gloom and night, and disappeared.
Then on my mind flashed sudden light: I knew
The climber for Prometheus and grew ware

Of fear that held me breathless, knowing his cause
In some strange way my own and vaguely, too,
That Fate, as though itself uncertain, watched
With speculative eyes for that to be;
While so with portent was the air oppressed
That soaring larks hung songless in the blue,
And whispering forests, seas vociferous,
Sank to so dead a silence that the guards,
Assembling in alarm along the walls,
Wheeled out from shadowy coigns huge mangonels,
Slings, catapults; or crowded to the towers
With mail half donned.
But soon he re-appeared,
Slipped through the unguarded loop-hole and began
His perilous descent. At intervals
Above him where he clung a bright patrol
Would fill the embrasure's blank with flash of arms
And glint of slanted spears, and then affright
Would grip me and the very earth hold breath
In anguished silence.
Yet so wary he,
He reached the bastion's foot unseen whereat,
The string of silence snapping, all about
Was glad relief and quick resume of life;
But that majestic figure musing still,
With half unfold of slow deliberate wings
Spired high above the dome and for a space

Hung splendidly like to a cloud-whorl caught
And rippled about by westering rose and gold
In the bright shallows of the ebbing day,
And then as though with all well satisfied,
Making full spread of radiant wings wherefor
The heavens seemed all too narrow, passed from sight.
  But ever with cautious steps Prometheus moved
Lest watchful eyes should mark him from the walls,
And plunging through the dragging lower mists
Whose streamers swept the hill-tops, reached thereby
A windy height of granite wreck and thence,
Descending steeps by wild goats browsed on, ran
Through woods a-whisper with the lisp of leaves
And haunted by the songs of summer brooks
Towards the valley far below, as one
Who brings glad news to men oppressed by war
Of peace proclaimed and happier days to be.
  I following, came at eve to where he stood
Beside a ring of huts, about him grouped
Men clad in stinking skins, with earth-stained hands
And apathetic eyes—a sullen brood,
Yet each a bestial likeness of himself.
They, as he spoke, scarce knew his speech their own
So softly fell the words; yet savage eyes
Gleamed doubtfully and growl of question passed
From lip to lip. What were their griefs to him?
Could he know aught of cold and the long fight

With hunger? Of that ever lurking fear
Of darkness that was theirs? Yet strangely passed
Suspicion from their minds till these no less
Pressed round him closely, drawn despite themselves.
And so all listened: some with curious eyes;
Others enraptured finding in his face
Strange food and consolation. "This," he cried,
Holding aloft a thing that flashed and leapt,
Flickered and fell away then flashed again,
"Wherein abides the secret of all power,
I give not to a few but unto all;
Enjoyed by all it shall be dear to each
As his own choice possession; but denied
To each and all it shall corrupt the few,
Bring leprosy upon their souls and check
Due exercise of love. Alas! I know
What ill must needs befall, and yet to men
Shall come such good at length as had not been
This gift of mine withheld."
Now as he spoke
The trees upon the clearing's westward edge
Spread out black hands of shade across the grass
As though to gather crumbs perchance let fall
From that strange table. Children, nestling close,
Sat spell-bound at his feet, all motionless
Save when unconsciously a little hand
Stole out and touched his raiment. Then again:

"Yonder," he cried, "deep in the evening hush
Prepares my punishment for this default—
This crime of love which I commit for you.
Keep then in mind the memory of my words:
That Love alone endows the wavering soul
With strength to win to just and perfect peace
Beyond the will of any god to give,
Or power of any god to take away.
But now they come to whom by Fate is given
To wreak fierce vengeance on me. Theirs shall be
But the swift act of malice—that achieved,
Their might shall wither, wherefore I must needs
For my deliverance look to men alone;
Yet shall my bonds hold fast while one remains
Refused his share of this I bring in hand;
And all the sufferings of all souls denied,
And all the pain that men shall know whose light
Is darkened; all the joylessness and want
That needed not to be: these, till they cease,
Shall rend and tear my breast. But hapless ye,
Cursed with so great a fate, whose is to cling,
Desperate, blind, with crushed and bleeding hands,
To the steep ladder set amongst the dead,
Reaching ye know not whither! Wherefore soon,
Lest darkness overtake you, for your solace
In unexpected guise shall come to you
Mine own familiar spirit, Hope, to be

Your never-failing helper. She shall move
Before you ever showing how all defeat
Is but the painful path to victory."
He ceased and I withdrew me, but what time
Unclosed the fragrant bloom of summer dusk
Wherein as pistil hanging wet with dew
Drooped one bright star, a sudden ruthless hand
Shattered its velvet petals and a flame
Shot red alarm o'er Heaven's high citadel;
Huge ports, flung wide, unlidded eyes of fire
That glared upon the world, and angry powers—
Gods in their dreadful panoply of mail—
Led forth their dense arrays till torrent rage
Choked all the paths to earth.
Soon rush of wings
And hurrying warrior forms with plumes astream
Smokelike from casques of flame confused the night;
From out his caverned deeps the sea perturbed
By din on isle and mainland, roaring loud,
Dragged at his mastiff-chain, while through the world
Was panic search and summons till uprose
A cry that, ceasing on a sudden, left
The darkness dumb with terror. In the woods,
In caves, lay huddled close, fearing the more
Since now they had whereof they might be robbed,
The anxious brood of men while I, leaf-screened,
Looked out upon a vale on whose slope sides

Glittered in countless ranks the embattled gods,
And at its end, beside a cloud athrob
With white intensities of inward flame,
Prometheus standing bound, upon him fixed
The gaze of myriad hate.
Then Jove revealed
His dreadful splendours and, since none might look
Upon that face and live, the host veiled eyes;
But he—the young Prometheus: he alone—
Withstood him face to face with pitying scorn,
Unmindful of himself and of his doom.
Sentence pronounced, insistent cries arose
Of hate and vague alarm, and fierce demand
For instant execution, and great Jove,
Because his heart was troubled by the scorn
Of him whose trespass was his own rebuke,
Withholding sign or speech, false to himself,
Unwitting loosed his grasp on power supreme,
For when the shouts had died of them who bore
Their victim forth towards the place assigned,
Through the rapt stillness of a midnight world,
Before that dreadful judgment seat arose,
Filling the place where late Prometheus stood,
A loathsome form palsied with unresolve:
The thing that eyeless yet disaster sees,
And lipless whispers doubt and sows dismay,
Which men call Fear—his servant on a time

And mainstay of his rule—to hold henceforth
Him too in secret bonds.
A wild ravine
Splits through the central spine of that vast range
Which bounds the Scythian waste; this having gained,
With jeers and mockery renewed they scourged
And spat upon Prometheus as he stood,
His raiment torn from off his gleaming limbs,
Naked beneath the moon; yea, angrier grown,
Had crushed and slain him but that as they stormed
Them also new dismay beset. His mien
Was that of one of final triumph sure
Who seeming ever worsted yet attains
To victory in the end, whence they, perturbed,
Shrinking from last adventure, all as one,
Cried loud for speedy ending. Summoned so,
Came Strength and Violence and haled him up,
And chained him to the rock.
But this achieved
Their exultation died, and they, in haste
Withdrawing thence, were set upon by fears
And vexed by new disquiet, lest in the world
Worship might somehow cease or strange defect
Deprive their lofty shrines of men's regard;
Wherefore at length in panic flight they fled
By many paths, streaming to south and east
By reedy Oxus and green Bactrian vales

Towards the Ind; and westward flocking down
To fane-crowned shores and isles of old resort—
All with unhappy prescience knowing their rule
No more a thing assured.
Meanwhile in caves,
Dark dens and turf-built huts, men listening marked
The uproar die, the clamour of voices faint
Behind the trees—beyond the farthest hill—
And so from out the world that day might dawn.

BOOK IV

THE ARGUMENT

THE power of the gods comes to an end. Men, their hard lot alleviated by the gift of Prometheus and, further, encouraged by his familiar spirit, Hope, advance in the arts of civilization. In time, however, the Strong re-establish in a more grinding form that tyranny over the Weak and the Poor which Prometheus had incurred the wrath of the gods to destroy. News of this reaches the Titan. His protest.

Now men, their minds in travail, pondering still
The words of young Prometheus, all night long
Had listened trembling, but about the hour
When life turns eastward peering for the dawn,
Within the brooding dark was born to them
Hope; and in silence grouped with wondering eyes
They gazed upon her—touched the tiny hands
Whose hold was yet so feeble as she lay
Nestling in doubtful arms.
And gazing so,
There came to them in mind the strange conceit
That not the gods had made the dark with noise
Dreadful, but that the shapeless beast which lurks,
Feared, felt, yet ever unseen, in forest glooms,
Beside still, windless pools of blackened rains
And juices of decay, had nightlong raged
And snouted, roared and snuffed about their doors;
That, further, it had borne within its breast
A wound beyond all cure and maybe now,
Buried beneath the wreckage it had wrought,
Lay dead, and they at dawn would find it dead,
And mark and marvel at its monstrous bulk;
Whence they in heart already deemed themselves

Enfranchised of the woods and safe at will
To follow the swift rivers hurrying down
Through silent valleys to the plain and on
They knew not whither. But that very night
Began new misery: bewildering griefs
Assailed them—restless cravings and vague sense
Of things desired ever to be withheld.

Thus was deliverance still delayed till Hope,
Grown unobserved full stature, lured them forth;
She as they followed her would sing them songs
Of things they had not dreamt then, spreading wide
Her unsuspected wings in the dull air,
Would pass beyond their sight and leave them vexed
By fears and many questions. Yet at length,
Returning as she went in freakish mood,
She brought them gifts of unfamiliar flowers
Which, though too soon they faded, still were proof
Of lands more fruitful, sunnier skies afar.

Now knowing that in their hearts was memory still
Of him who pitying men had brought them light
At so great cost, methought that on those paths
By which the gods with fierce yet fearful hearts
Had dragged Prometheus, they whom he so loved
Up from the world would come in glad procession
To set him free and hail him justified
Of all that he for men had dreamed and dared.
But none, alas! essayed that path of pain—

A rugged track which soon athwart the waste
Sprawled faint, weed-hidden, leading none knew whither;
While to the Titan, unexpectant now,
Instead came rumours running on the wind
Of might perverted; of the gods dethroned
Or helpless in the master-hands of priests;
Of greater powers new-risen who made the hearts
Of men their temples—Lust and Greed and Pride
And Hate and black Ambition. These to them
Whose strength was great, strength in abundance gave
And from the weak their little took away,
Filling the world with strife, and though the gods
Whose thrones had steadied to elemental storm
Were now no more to fear, yet godship stayed—
Such godship as of old had held the world
In fee for but a few—and still the poor,
When in the pitiless dawn the yellow sun
Swung like a bell summoning hideously
To hard unceasing labour, woke and cursed
The day that gave them birth. Alone of these
Some few crept up to where Prometheus hung
And called to him and told him of their woes,
And wept and knew that he, too, wept and so
In some sort comforted, returned again;
But never came there other.

Then as one
Who through sea-vapours marks distorted shapes

In motion huge, I saw the ruthless years
Beat on that martyred form. Hope once was his
That the fierce gods, so swift to hate, might turn
As swiftly to compassion and unbind
His chafed and aching limbs; but they had gone—
Passed to the wastes of Night—and on their way
Had pausing flung to men—to men alone—
The power to loose their victim's bonds.
Ah, vain
All hope of mortal succour! His keen ears
Caught in the gusty winds the rage and roar
Of rival nations. Wreaths of battle-smoke
Swept up the gorge like phantoms of despair
With dreary droop of wings and shrouded heads;
While spirits, dispossessed of peace and driven
By war from village-hearths, with arms outspread,
Bore shrill lamentings to his ears but stayed
No answer. Yet not theirs, nor any voice
Of woe, nor wail of suffering in the world,
Escaped his ears: the sobs of lonely souls
Weeping their grief out in the dead of night,
Answerless prayers and the wild cries of Want
With pale, pinched face dragging through lands of plenty,
Came up from out the world and were to him
As birds of prey that, ravenous, tore his heart
With bloody beak and claw.
Even as I gazed

That slumbering fire, his spirit, fanned by the wings
Of great indignant thoughts, burst into blaze:
"Ah ye!" he cried, "From whose neglect and hate—
Tyrants with scorn of tyrants on your lips—
I suffer still, give heed. He whom I braved
And they who shared his savage rule are gone,
And never will return. Long ere their flight
These last came driven by strange despondencies
And auguries of doom to me, their foe,
And subtly watchful spake with smiling lips:
'Soon we depart from hence, but you abide
To whom alone has been revealed his name
Who shall succeed us. Yours is, then, the power
To take delightful vengeance for the wrongs
Heaped up by us on you; his name will stab
Our hearts with envy, wreck our peace, and gloom
Our waning hours with the usurper's shadow.
Will you not tell it?'
Ah! I knew the name,
I and none other in the world beside;
But what if I had answered—told them all:
That this chained hand with its own strength should grasp
Their huge relinquished realms, and that the voice
Given to enthunder all authority
Was mine—their victim's—yours did ye but will!
With this to claim—this heritage of love—
Ye still delay! When shall the time grow ripe

To pluck the chill corrosion from my limbs
Of these old fetters—these old bonds of death
Wherein so often I have died to hope?
Will ye not come, or shall my cry go forth
And die unanswered on the waste for ever—
The waste about me far wherein I watch
With weary eyes the constellations driven
So often up from rising to their set
Across the hollow night that I could tell
Did one star slip his leash? With me still chained
What freedom can be yours? Ye know not joy,
Ye Strong! the days go by and leave you sad,
Your powers unexercised. Are not your hearts,
Asmoulder with rebellion, daily crushed
By strange indignities because your hands
Shrink from the work to do? Ye would be deaf
To wrongs demanding cure that seems too great,
And yet these wrongs behind all disregard
Are your own secret grief. Ye would be blind
To that unwelcome shadow at your feast
Which fixes hungry eyes on cup and plate,
And yet his pinched reproach grows day by day
A load too heavy for your hearts to bear!
But mark! although my limbs are used to chains,
These chains of their own strength are weak to bind;
Power too is mine to weak catastrophe;
To thrust aside the thing the Strong call justice,

And if, self-loosed and free at last, I will
That half mankind shall no more, such the hell
They find the world they come to, curse the powers
Which forced them into birth; that all shall share
My stintless gift ensuring with it freedom,
Wisdom and fruitful peace, then by the griefs
And fears the gentle suffer; by the love
That fain would loose these fetters from my limbs,
And needs must loose them ere itself be free,
It shall be as I will."

BOOK V

THE ARGUMENT

THE various influences which impede social progress make rejoinder to Prometheus: the Spirit of Strife pours scorn on his dreams (p. 57); the Idle Rich justify themselves (p. 61), and the cold, venomous song of the Fatalist is heard (p. 63). Then comes the Appeal of the Weak and the Poor (p. 66).

He making end,
Afar rose hideously the clash of steel;
Fierce cries for blood of nations stung to wrath;
And sounds of strife wherein was heard the beat
And grind of iron heels on peaceful roads;
The grunt and snarl of wrathful men at grips;
And, last, the ghastly hush which broods as peace
Above late conquered lands—a prelude fit
For that harsh voice which blared in trumpet tones
The ruthless gospel of a world in arms:

"Whom dost thou call on, O Titan! no longer in cavern and den
Live the mortals for whom thou didst dare, O thou, so rejected of men
That none but the shiftless and worthless—the tools that have failed in my hand—
Will even, the bribe to their liking, give ear to the thing thou has planned:
That weakness emboldened shall climb by the paths that I bled on and bring
The purple and crown to acclaim thee—itself in thyself—as king!

"For night with its dreams has made boast of as truth what the day denies:
The gospel that shapes itself darkly and feeds upon folly and lies—
Yea, folly and lies if I say so, for who will join issue with me?—
Stark folly that fastens new fetters on them that would fain be free,
And lies that would brand and belittle, and hold me decrepit of will
Whose summons rings clear through the storm when the nations with terror are still.

"I am he that stood by the waters and stirred up the peoples to strife;
I gave to the strong man the weaker to rule and dispose of his life;
I shocked with the blast of my trumpets the dissolute lanes of the world—
Shook life from the folds of the war-flags that never again shall be furled;
I flung at the ramparts of Rome till they crumbled Goth, Vandal, and Hun,
For manhood unmenaced is spoiled unawares of the things it has won.

"Where greatness was snatched and rejoiced in, or men shaped the world to their will;
Where even a bondsman bestirring for freedom took courage to kill;

Where'er to the hazard indifferent stood one up to do or to die—
His trust in himself and none other, himself for himself—there was I;
But you—your dream is of that which would canker men's souls from their birth;
You—preacher of peace that corrupteth—I, Strife, am the salt of the earth!

"Have done with the dreams that are ended; look forth upon things as they are;
Joy is still in the might that is master and mocks at all ultimate bar;
The weak are the clay that is turned by the potter and burnt in the fire—
Yea, shaped to the shape and burnt to the hardness the Strong desire;
The clay to itself wouldst thou leave to shape itself, needing but tools?
Would the gates of themselves shut me out from a city of dreamers and fools?

"Is the rule of the Strong in their strength to the hurt of the Weak as you dream?
What mercy or help were in weakness if hailed for a moment supreme?
How would it rise to the buffet, how would it battle and build?
To whom would men cry when o'erbrimming the fountains of hate were filled?

Who would hew paths through the wreck when the old order
crumbled and fell,
And build up the walls that once more should prevail against
Chaos and Hell?

"The work of my hand is the crown of the power that from old-
time has wrought;
What is of worth in the world save the spoils of the fights I
have fought?
I have bitted the winds and the waves; I have harnessed the
storm like a steed;
I have blown on the red flame of battle that men might be
served in their need;
My lordship and glory are Man's, to him there is nought but
must bow;
With a sword for my gift true Saviour am I of mankind—not
thou!"

Here ceased the voice and left the listening night
Gripped by oppressive hush save that at times
A fitful wind awoke or, loosed by frost,
Sharp, running shingle on the nearer cliffs
Leapt screaming into silence; while afar,
Remotely terrible, the avalanche
In still, white solitudes plunged bellowing down
The breathless sheer of unadventured heights.
As moveless as the cliff whereon he hung—
Vast head and fore-front of the world's despair—

Prometheus high above me overgloomed
The night with his great presence. Even as winds
Awake and failing, wake and fail again,
And fill the forest ways with mournful sense
Of things that may not be, of dreams and hopes
That, long since dead, yet live; so fell the sounds,
Shuddering upon the night, of his distress,
Whereat uneasily as one who fain
Would turn from witness of a strong man's grief,
I crept along a rocky ledge that hung
Above the westward night. Reclining there,
The song of one who sang in careless ease
Stole up to me from out a world of dreams
Where noonday breezes linger and the gold
Of sunset burns throughout the guarded night
In drowsy blooms and lustrous, globing fruits:

"Wherefore, O thou empty reaper, crying in a desert place!
Deem'st thou me my brother's keeper, his deprival my disgrace?
Canst thou not, the winds imploring — clutching at their
garment-hem—
Take to heart for thy assuring that for answer given by them?

"Wouldst thou have us make denial—scathe with human scorn
the gods;
Break of wrath the brazen vial; bare our backs to needless
rods;

Charge them with injustice proving in ourselves their strange default,
And, at things by them set moving, rage and vainly bid them halt,

"When the world their hands have fashioned yields us largess of its best—
Yea, as though with love impassioned crowning whom it hath caressed?
That were but to spite the givers—we who know not why they give;
Scorn the thing that each delivers unto us that we may live!

"Rather would we such thanks render as the gods themselves approve—
Such as thou wouldst have him tender whom thy gifts assure of love:
This that he so finding favour should of favour take his fill—
Taste and test its pleasant savour; thank and look towards thee still.

"Therefore in unstinted joying worthy thanks we give for all;
Feasts for penitence employing, fasting not lest pride befall;
Gathering sweets with humble spirit and for fear of harsh rebuff
Stretching forth as proof of merit hands that cannot hold enough.

"Thus we, sure of fullest measure, take unquestioned all that comes;
Witness, lapped in careless leisure, high defeats and martyrdoms;

See in all the world's endeavour, tireless while we lust and sleep,
As it nears fruition ever, ripening fields for us to reap.

"These and things in common, truly now bestowed on us alone,
Since to us alone is fully given to use them as our own,
With due thanks—clear proof of fitness so to use them—we accept:
Surely gifts that fail not witness to commandments closely kept!

"Wherefore, then, with vain accusing vex us who have work to do—
Work, no whit of our own choosing, set for us as yours for you?
Think you: from the teeming midden—life and death in one same gloom—
Do the roots, the day forbidden, hurl reproaches at the bloom?

"Nay; then give us rest from railing; we, too, bow to Fate's decrees;
Hardship yours not unavailing, ours a use-determined ease;
Yet no less we fain would tender grateful homage to the Powers:
Bathe our souls in full surrender lest the sin of sins be ours!"

He come to end, a thin and venomous voice,
With breaks of hideous laughter, gave to speech
The thing the rigorous mind perforce holds true,
And yet whereof man's great, unreasoning heart
With blind assurance cries: "'Tis false! 'Tis false!"

"Titan who, thine own worst foe,
Brood'st on dreams and deeds undone!
What great thing hast thou to show?
What of worth for mortals won?

"Tears! Compassion! nought beside!
These as salve for pain and shame!
Men pathetic in their pride
Suffering spit upon thy name.

"Do they lighten woe who weep
Unavailing tears to know
That the few with joy must reap
What with grief the many sow?

"Shall I urged by fear of fate
Cant of Common Brotherhood,
All because about my gate
There be some who pine for food?

"Did I starve would all be fed?
Would my pain secure their ease?
If, that life be surelier sped,
Some must suffer—why not these?

"Simple fool, that wouldst amend
In thine own despite the laws
Which to one predestined end
Work with neither change nor pause!

"This one starves and that one feeds:
Thus it is and can but be;
Think'st thou that the darkness heeds
Rebel curse or frantic plea?

"Yea, though thou with grief distraught
Seest him pine who needs must die,
To the powers it matters nought
Which one suffers—he or I.

"Who shall from our dust declare
When a hundred years have sped:
This one lived on lordly fare;
That one perished lacking bread?

"Say, if nought can crown our pains,
Nor from prayer can aught befall,
What but this as truth remains:
Lives are nothing; Life is all!"

Then silence fell as frost on flowers, and love
And hope, it seemed, lay dying in the night;
But soon came quavering through the gloom a cry
That at the first was like to his who pleads
With hungry face at countless iron doors
In adamantine streets; but gathering strength
It filled the night with menace and I knew
His voice once more, who to the innumerous woes

Of men whose souls are baffled of all they would,
Wild utterance gave what time before my eyes
The shadowy chorus crossed the darkened stage:

"Great Titan! with waiting we weary; the gift thou didst bring
us of old—
What is its virtue to clothe us and feed us who hungry and cold
And nameless and hapless, and dead for all hope from the day
of our birth,
Still wander more homeless than beasts of the wild on the face
of the earth?

"The words of the message thou brought'st echo still as a mock
in our pain;
Thou didst climb the high heavens, in truth, but thy labour
and love were in vain;
What to us are the fates of the gods of the prime, their dismays
and defeats,
When, of mortals, the mighty, as ruthless as they, have climbed
into their seats?

"And yet in their turn, as the gods thou didst brave in the days
that are dead,
These, the mighty of men, at the thought of us desperate are
stricken with dread;
In an angry dismay, with unpurposeful ploughs having furrowed
the sands,
They shrink from the sea-bitter harvest—the fruits of the work
of their hands.

"Ears have they truly but hear not; eyes but they do not see;
And they hide from themselves who bound fast, that the power
is still theirs to set free;
Whereby are their counsels made fruitless, the things they
determine proved vain,
And fear and self-loathing are theirs at the clamour of hunger
and pain.

"And they know that the desperate eyes are upon them of
women and men,
From the darkness of alley and slum, from the horror of brothel
and den,
Fast held in the fetters of circumstance, fed on the poisonous
fruits
That are grown in the gardens of Hell with the fatness of death
at their roots.

"Ah, Titan! so much have we suffered, so long have waited—
at last
Wilt thou not say that the time of our proving is over and past?
That the day draweth nigh which we dream of with joy in the
midst of our pains,
When our souls and our wills and our feet and our hands shall
be rid of their chains."

BOOK VI

THE ARGUMENT

PROMETHEUS remains silent and, as a commentary on his dreams of peace and goodwill, the empty shadows of all that ever lived are swept in a spectral stream past the rock to which he is chained. The Pilgrim looks down with horror on the phantasmagoria of death until he is himself overwhelmed by the rising flood and becomes conscious of the countless myriads of the weak and poor which form its under-currents. Voices of reproach from the distant deep sound through the confusion, and the song of her who sits beside the Fountains of the Dawn is heard in reply (p. 78).

Scarce had it come to end than ghastly change
Was wrought within the darkness; chill diffuse,
Like to a drifting sea-fog, filled the gorge,
And far-off, toneless utterance, formed, it seemed,
Upon the livid lips of some dead thing,
Stole shuddering through the silence: "Here abide
The shadows cast by all that ever lived,
Eternally persistent."
Lifting eyes,
I saw within the mist pale spectre forms
In flight grotesque, each blind to each, with all
The dreams, the treacheries, hates and pitiless greeds
That urged them on so hideously betrayed
I feared to turn lest that I gazed upon
Might prove but pictures thrown upon the mist,
As on a waving screen, by one whose face
Leered devilish through the darkness.
Such the stir;
So were the shadows driven by blindfold hopes,
Despair and furious passions, that the night
Was rent by soundless cries and blasphemies;
Unheard appeals from drifting multitudes
Troubled by their own dreams were hurled at heaven,

While spectres, dragged down vortices of fate,
Stretched hands in vain for help. In the far gloom
Amorphous shadows—Famine, Pestilence,
Contagious Fears, and Death that softly runs
And seizes unawares—took grisly shape
From men's imaginations. Dragon-winged,
With fiery eyes, insatiate swallow, these
Battened upon the flocking human shades
Even as fierce monsters, ravening, plough their way
With dreadful jaws a-gape through hapless shoals
In oceans refugeless. In vain their prey
Raised hands to the dead skies; in vain they called,
Or seemed to call, on powers of ancient trust
To hide them from the woes that knew no cease,
Till but a timorous few at last remained
Skirting with fear the bitter edge of death.
  Even these mid-journey would at times be lost,
And huddled shadows shaped like men were swept
Helpless with baser things amongst the drift
And haggard wreck of time; while in the mist
The ghostlike sense of deathly silence grew
Where never life had been nor any sound,
And crept and lengthened as the darkness creeps
Dogging the evening sun.
  Yet after pause
The ghastly mock of life was ever renewed:
Dead peoples hurried by and in the night

Was mirrored doing again of deeds long done.
Nations whose dreams had been imperial passed—
For witness of whose glory now remain
But a few grass-grown mounds—along with whom
Moved things of ancient horror: dreadful shapes
Of men bird-headed, devilish in their calm,
And cold, set masks of death from whose blank eyes
Sly, watchful murder peeped; while shadowy files
Of priests, whose long-tubed trumpets high aslant
Blared soundless in the silence, made slow way
With ritual pomp, winding through prostrate crowds,
Beneath the indifferent gaze of monster gods.
Now though I scarce, so fear oppressed my mind,
Could watch that hideous triumph march of death,
The sense within me grew to point of tears
Of man, in tireless fight with powers unseen,
For ever baffled, crushed, yet evermore
Unconquered and unconquerable; and though
Blinded by blood and dust, beholding still
Reflections of that light he needs must follow.
So musing, I discerned the lonely shades
Wherein had eagle souls been mewed of yore
To chafe and languish with immortal scorn
At mortal limits; figures of stern defeat
With hopeless, weary eyes that, suffering, crushed
Insurgent thoughts to silence on their lips;
Of old despair; of hate too surely ripe;

Yet lacked not other shades whom Love had crowned—
Victors still radiant even here with joy
That death plucked at in vain.
But though they passed,
To that macabrean world came nought of change,
Save that new powers of evil lifted head,
And mightier shadows, bent on vaster ends,
Spread wider desolation. Dimly seen,
Shapes like to eagles moved within the gloom,
A phantom Caesar following in their wake,
Close-cropped, imperial-browed, who grasped in hand
A shadowy torch whereof the streaming smoke
Wrapt the dead world about in blinding peace.
He gone, while still the legions trampled wide,
About their march the spectral menace crept
Of countless savage forms with eyes aflame,
And bestial hands that seized and broke. These soon
Tore down walls consecrate and set the camp
Of desolation in the city's midst,
And gave to Fear and Want to guard the roads;
And though they trampled underfoot the things
For ever stronger than themselves, and snatched
At crowns that crushed their savage wills, awhile,
By awe assured of power and dreadful rule,
Were mighty as they seemed.
Then they, too, passed,
And other shadows followed: warrior hosts

Swept by with spears aslant like barley blown
All one same way, their standards in the void
Astream then dashed to earth; and maniac kings
Who, missioners of hell and darkness, drove
Their chariots headlong down the skies of ruin;
But evermore beneath the mightier rush
Was race of meaner shades—the poor, thin ghosts
Of men of small regard whose souls had fed
On paltry bargainings, and slept secure
In faith to find their journeyman, the sun,
About his tasks at dawn.
Aloof from these,
Foredoomed to frustrate dreams or fruitless fame,
Would gleam a face upon the instant seen,
Like to a statue's carven strongly, held
For ever in the grip of one fierce thought,
Or desolate in the moment of his pride,
And ware of doom. Nor failed the final crown
Of high defeat and last calamity
To men whose dreams were of a nobler age—
Untimely reapers looking for the grain
Ere yet the blade was green.
So through the gloom
Swept on the dreadful pageant: now it seemed
The generations moved dreaming of peace;
And now the deeps of hell were broken up,
And through the perturbation spectres raced,

Blown on the wings of fear or, pausing, strove
With hideous care to cleanse remembered stains
From off their hands, till forth from gulfs of death
Thick clouds of battle-smoke upspiring formed
A bow of baleful promise in the sky
Assuring war that never again should cease—
A giant arch through which was seen afar,
Beneath such skies as never came to dawn,
Innumerous lines of bivouac fires asmoke,
With sleeping soldier forms about them ranged;
While monstrous in the foreground, feet apart,
A spectral figure stood whose brooding bulk
Was crowned with dominance.

Then I grew ware,
That those still shapes about the bivouac fires
Were dead men—coated skeletons—and he,
That monster-master of a warring world,
A grisly shape of death with teeth a-grin,
And sockets blank within whose eyeless gloom
Was smoulder of evil fire.

Soon he, too, passed,
But having gone the ghostly sense remained
That unespied he stood there brooding still,
His feet upon the bones of nations dead,
And in his hands the fate of men unborn.

At last, by sense of near disturbance roused,
I saw with horror that about the rock

The tide of death with countless ghosts aswim
Had risen—was rising still—that even now
The sullen foam flew up of waves that beat
Beneath my perilous ledge and ever crept
Nearer in wilder flood, until I lay
Helpless, by racing currents overswept,
As a drowned man that log-like comes to pause,
Meshed fast by clinging weeds, clutched at and held
By hands invisible, beneath the rush
And roar of racing waters. Lying so,
In time become accustomed to the gloom,
I saw about and past me pouring down—
The mud and driftage of the bottom stream—
Men frustrate-souled, scarce conscious of themselves,
Haggard from black unprofitable days;
And women, hands upflung, with streaming hair,
In frantic flight, round-mouthed with horror, stung
By knowledge and despair, till once again
The lifeless voice enjoined: "Look well on these,
For these are they whose tears make full the cup
Wherefrom the nations drink."
Then hubbub rose
Of noises meaningless—loud screams of pain,
And the harsh clamour of the labouring world
Heard from a place of silence; but with time
Became distinguishable ordered sound—
Upbraidings, passionate calls—and I, though stunned

By din of racing currents, gathered sense
Of imminent disaster. Through the deeps
Above me sounded, passing to and fro
'Twixt mouth and source of that infernal stream,
The hollow thunder of an infinite sea,
Far storm reverberations, hoarse appeals
As though to mountain springs whose tribute failed,
And cries despairing shivering down the glooms
Of winding ducts and veins, and through the dark
Of whispering caverns, as of eager drops
Running on soundless feet, till softly fell,
From far, beside the founts of dawn, a voice
Like unto hers who, crouched at desolate eve,
Calling on them that were not, wept bereaved
In Rama and would not be comforted:

"I watch by the founts of the dawn,
Shut about by the grayness and gloom
Of the end and beginning, where yawn
The caverns of dream and of doom—
By the mystical well-head of birth
Whence hurry replenishing streams
To the uttermost parts of the earth
With their burdens of whispers and dreams;

"And I pray lest the streams now a-flow
Should fail at their source and run dry,
And the prophecies presaging woe
Be brought to fulfilment thereby;

Lest life should lose grip on its gains
And the fruits of its labours of yore,
And but for the winds and the rains
The world be untroubled once more.

"For men so again and again
Have utterly failed in God's hand—
Made His purpose so seemingly vain
That He caused them to cease from the land;
Save a few who with ignorance cursed,
Driven forth from the things they had known,
Were the last and again were the first,
Were the seed that was spared to be sown.

"These, thrust from where once they were kings,
Dispossessed, with dispirited tread,
The scoff of majestical things
Bequeathed by a world long dead,
Drifted darkly and nought to their minds
Were the proofs of the splendours of old—
Slaves were they whipped by the winds,
And preyed on by hunger and cold.

"But I knew that, in truth, as His might
So His mercy was great; that the bow
Should be set in the cloud in their sight
As a symbol whereby they should know
That God had relented again—
Had given them dreams to fulfil,
And a myriad years to attain
To the goal yet to win if they will.

"Now once more in the hush of the dawn
Comes menace of judgment anigh,
And the fear lest, the impulse withdrawn,
The well-head of life shall run dry;
Lest the unforeseen evil befall
That wasted the nations of yore,
When the unborn grew deaf to the call
And ceased to entreat at the door.

"Think not that the heralds of doom
Shall splendidly flash through the skies
With warning, or write on the gloom
Words plain to both foolish and wise!
The heralds of God are the broken,
The helpless, the hopeless, the weak,
And maybe even now has been spoken
The thing that of needs they must speak!"

BOOK VII

THE ARGUMENT

At a cry of agony from Prometheus the horror of the dead world suddenly vanishes. Chaos, attracted by the sound, hovers darkly overhead, and his laughter rings through the heavens. He passes on, leaving the world to a deeper darkness. The Eternal Sacrifice is revealed—the symbol of Divine Love and Compassion for Mankind. The memories of his youth and of the comfortable, unquestioning beliefs of those bygone days awake in the Pilgrim's mind. The Hymn of Divine Love (p. 86). The thick darkness clears away. Suddenly the aspect of Nature undergoes a change, the Great Spirit assumes visibility, and Prometheus becomes unconscious.

She making end, an agonized appeal
Burst from the Titan's lips like to that cry
Which once before, when on the shadowy stage
The sense of pitiless fate too heavy grew,
Had filled my soul with terror. At the sound
The phantom mock of life with instant check
Vanished from out the night and starting up,
With hand and arm whose curves gleamed marbly white
In some unearthly radiance, Panthea flung
Back from her brow the midnight of her hair;
But ere her sudden urgency of grief
Could mate itself with words, loud laughter crashed
Uproarious in the heavens, and as sharp frost
Transmutes quick glimmering waters tossed in air
To stillness magical, so she by fear
Was shocked to lovely lifelessness and held
As in a marble trance.
And that huge din?
It was old Chaos hovering on the bounds
Of his lost empire. He, inflamed by dreams
Of ancient rule restored, snuffing with glee
The scent of sickening hope, had ventured nigh;
And so the cliffs flung back his monstrous mirth,

And floorless caves that broached the central fires
Bellowed response, that, shocked with too great sound,
It seemed the globe with all its iron crags
Might on the instant split and fall away,
And crumble into nothing.
Thus a space
The solid world seemed torn by imminent pangs
Of dissolution—quivered as though beneath
The rush of countless legions thundering down
To mystic Armageddon, till the bulk,
Amorphous, menacing, of Chaos, spread
Bat-like with dreadful wings above the world,
Passed darkly off. But though his mockery died
From out the immediate night, yet was it heard
Renewed—again and, fainter yet, again—
Far down the shuddering night; then one last time,
With utter silence following in its train,
As though the impatient legions seeking way,
Baffled by long, unbroken mountain walls,
Had flood-like roared escape through a sky-blocked pass,
And spread through lands remote.
Thereon the gloom
Became, it seemed, a hideous nothingness
Inhabited by things immutable
And ghostly uncreation—such a hush
As, like a shroud, shall, all things come to end,
Obstruct the waning planets and enfold

For evermore this wrecked and wasted world—
Till one belated lightning flash revealed
Through rifted clouds far down the lonely night
The eternal Sacrifice—a drooping form
With yearning arms coerced to emptiness—
Clear-cut against a dull horizon break:
The mock of tempest, spat upon by rains,
And scourged by knotted hail.
Now that quick flash
Had likewise given to gaze the still demesne
Of ancient peace and restful certainty
To which the soul, by doubts and sorrows tried,
Returns at times, in dream, with wistful sense
Of things once dear let slip. Long since thereto
Had come the dayspring from on high, and there
Had grown that tree whose gracious fruit was for
The healing of the nations. . . . Turning thence,
Struggling with tears—as one who listens at eve,
After long years, to far-off village bells
Across the darkening, strange-familiar fields,
Lonely where once was all his world—it seemed
I walked awhile with them I loved of old,
And heard them speak, and felt once more the touch
Of gentle hands long folded in their rest
That helped when help was all, till in the night
A sudden voice burst into blossom of song
Hymning not mortal love but love divine:

"O Love divine! O secret strength and stay
And help of wavering life upon its way
From mortal darkness to immortal day!

"Thou sittest not in judgment; thou dost take
Grief by the hand and soothe the bitter ache
Of suffering hearts that know not how to break.

"By thee the smarting pure beneath the stain
Is salved, and though again and yet again
Sin comes, dear Love! thy tears are not in vain.

"Thou art the eyes by which to men are shown
The cares of other hearts beside their own,
And thine it is to comfort—thine alone!

"Thou art the ears that heed the bitter cry
Of men's dishonoured souls from slum and sty—
But, Love! not yet canst thou make full reply.

"And thine the lips that whisper day and night:
'By me alone shall men be led aright—
By me whose name is Love, whose crown is Light!'

"O sure fulfilment of the dream divine!
Though trampled down, dear Love! by powers malign,
The victory at length must needs be thine!"

The singer fallen on silence, once again
Loomed in the night—vast, imperturbable—
Sheer cliff and precipice, while, swung in space,
The solitary peaks renewed their watch,
And strewn along the bottom of the gorge
Snow fallen but late—cold scatterings of the wind—
Lay like a white shroud in a sepulchre
Wherefrom the dead had risen. High up the cliff
Glimmered, like dew-wet marble in the moon,
The Titan's giant limbs, while, dimly seen,
The gracious form of Panthea, late transfixed
In dumb appeal, with yield of reverence bent
As might a birch upon the edge of night
Sway, dreaming still, touched by the winds of dawn.
Soon tranquilly relaxed the white hands sank
Close clasped upon her bosom where but now
Had lain their wavering shadows, while the moon,
Grown pitiful, wove splendours in her hair
Even as a maiden fortunate in love
Might weave for her sad sister's brow a wreath
Of flowers of happy omen. Then to earth
She drooped with palms outspread before her eyes,
And met and mingled with the shadows drawn
Close in about her feet.

Thereon the night
Shivered to sound as though a wind had stirred
The leaves of autumn woods, or given to speech

The lips of many waters—yet no wind
Woke in the world, and the great ocean slept;
The crested peaks that sentinel the earth,
Marshalled upon its verge, with gradual flame
Glowed silvery to their cores—yet light was none
Save of the seasonable stars; the gorge,
Vast flaw and fracture of the granite globe,
Veiled splintered wall and signs of fiery stress
In golden haze contritely—yet the moon
Had taken no new splendour, nay, was blanched
As though surprised by an untimely dawn.
Alone Prometheus in that changing world,
Wrapt close about by his peculiar grief,
His shaggy head propped on his breast's huge slope
Like to a rock whose piled, impendent snows
Menace a vale with avalanche, remained
Impassive and remote; nor when the air,
With unseen movement vibrant, made disclose
Of zenith-sweeping rays in swift revolve
Eclipsing half the stars, then those bright rays
As wings begemmed with living eyes and edged
With running flames, did he uplift his face;
Nor yet when gazing on him, glorious, stood
That more than godlike Presence who long since
Had watched him climb the perilous steeps of heaven
And steal the fire for mortal men, well pleased
To see that quickening which Himself had sown

In the dead silt and germless ooze of time.
But now compunctiously the gaze divine
Dwelt on the Titan's face, and though alone
He saw the thing the price was paid for; knew,
And only He, the period set for pain—
Yea, that it had a period; that the chains,
Their undreamt purpose served, should be at last
Forgot in liberty—well-nigh, indeed,
Repented He of that Himself had willed.
But still Prometheus, cooped in his own woe,
Remained unconscious of that pitying Presence,
Yet, like to a sleeper soothed by happy dreams,
His features softened and where storm had raged
Of fierce revolt and unvictorious grief,
Came calm as of contentment, while his lips
Shaped toneless words as one who, hypnotized,
Makes full confession of his secret thoughts:

"Man is not what he was, for he has grown
Through countless spans of time a greater thing
Than that to which Thou gavest lust alone
And hunger first to sting.

"Yea as, perchance, that clay which Thou didst press
Left stain upon Thine hands, in turn it took
From touch with Thee a fuller consciousness
Than Thou at first wouldst brook;

"And yielding so itself to that design
Which is the outward shaping of Thy thought,
Transcended that which had been deemed divine
Ere clay to life was wrought.

"Whereby no dream, nought born of hope and pain,
No Voice, no Sibyl scroll the ages con,
Can point a goal set fast for man to gain
Because Thine own moves on.

"And though as yet he sees as day the night,
Acquainted but with darkness, Thou didst give
No less than fear of pain desire of light
To him that he might live:

"Desire that quickened in the primal ooze
Dim shapelessness and gave it foot-hold firm,
And from the first not all in dreams to choose
The part of god or worm;

"With dawning sense of pathways somehow sure;
Of gains or gains to be as, weak of will,
He stumbled on unconscious of the lure
That led him forth and still

"With secret mastery draws as in the prime
It drew him from the mire, till in despite
Of all that baffles he shall blindly climb
From blindness up to sight."

BOOK VIII

THE ARGUMENT

PROMETHEUS regains consciousness. The song of Prometheus. The vision fades and the Pilgrim descends the steep mountain side, passing through forests which steam in the warm darkness and thrill with the mysteries of birth and growth and death.

I know not when he ceased for in my mind
His words awoke strange echoes—sharply struck
And set vibrating strings of answering note.
These hushed at last, upon the Titan's face,
Late but a set and lifeless mask, appeared
The look of one who, driven by last despair,
Has grappled with fear and death and from them snatched
Puissance greater than their own; and thus,
About him grouped the vast solemnities,
In a great brooding ring, of crest and peak,
As though with new resolve he flamed to speech:

"Yea, despised and rejected of men! with reason he spoke of me so
Whose tongue is a sword, and whose words are as shafts that are shot from a bow;
He is lord as he boasts of the world and all life at his throne must bend knee,
Yet I, who can match with his strength but my weakness, am stronger than he!

"For his office is but for a while with the flame of his wrath
to consume
What of old-time was sown and has seeded again and again in
the gloom;
Still he calls and his call is still heard, but when there shall
answer him none
He shall pass and of all be forgotten, his work that was set
being done.

"And ye who assail me with scorn from the haunts of dead
hopes and despairs,
Who neighbour with death and coerce your own souls with
your terrible prayers;
Who would stand in the night with your backs to the dawn
when the day is at hand:
Your answer will not be with words, yet ye shall in good time
understand.

"But now ye have heard with dismay in the death-haunted
dark that ye sought,
(Did ye hide yourselves there to escape from the fight that
must needs be fought?)
The sound of the nearing of one who the strength that is in
you shall prove,
Who nor pauses nor turns from his purpose; whose name,
though ye fear him, is Love!

"Yea, already his fight is half fought, for your souls, love-compelled, have asked, 'Why?'
Ye have dared in your dreams to raise question, 'Is this, then, a truth or a lie?'
Ye have learnt how of old-time they fettered me fast who was born to be free;
And having considered my bonds ye have asked, 'Who ordained this to be?'

"And, furthermore, now ye would know what the thing was ye set forth to seek;
Would examine the ultimate worth to the strong of the spoils of the weak;
Well assured that your trappings and pomp are but garments for conscience to rend;
That of him whose is much shall yet more be required than he hath in the end.

"And ye learn that the thing which is needful, yea, that which shall save you alone
When your follies have run full circle and your hopes are all foundered or flown,
Is nor softness, nor riches, nor plenty, but this that ye needs must have light—
Be torn with the passion for seeing and strain from your blindness to sight.

"With time—yea, good time—for uprooting the tares from
the fields ye have sown;
For so much to be brought to the light that is strange yet
must needs be known;
For so much of yourselves to be proved, unrecognized, close
and at hand,
Who know not the world ye have won and as strangers are
strange in the land.

"Where was haste when the spirit of God moved over the face
of the deep?
When life in the sweat of the swamp woke slowly to swim and
to creep?
What if there be much to be learnt that to-day eludes know-
ledge and sense—
Mayhap ye will grasp it to-morrow—a year—or a thousand
years hence!

"Yea, thus, if so needs it shall be, for the thing that is making
is Man:
Man, hammered too much and too little—kept true with such
pains to the plan;
Think'st thou that the craftsman will weary and bring on a
sudden to nought,
A thing throughout ages unnumbered so slowly and painfully
wrought?

"Instead he gives proof of new skill in the opening of ears and
of eyes;
In the seeking for dawn though as yet ye have fear of the sun
that may rise;
In the dread that despairs of itself; in the faintness whose
dream is of might,
And in prayers that are fearfully formed on your lips asking
fullness of sight.

"Such sight as thereby ye shall see that the shadows which
walk in the gloom
Are like to yourselves, and, if damned, ye, too, must bear part
in their doom;
'Are these,' ye shall cry, 'whom we feared; were our own,
then, the prayers we denied?
Was the grief that corroded our hearts but the price that we
paid for our pride?'

"With clearness of sight ye shall see, then, the pathways that
hitherward lead,
And, your hearts with new courage inspired, your strength
shall not fail in your need;
By his hand who shall free me from chains shall the veils of
the dark be withdrawn,
And lifting your eyes with incredulous joy ye shall cry: 'Lo,
the dawn!'

"Dawn at its orient birth leaping up from the sea with a shout;
Dawn where was darkness and dread, and splendour of day where was doubt;
Dawn with imperative hand, in abolishing blindness and night,
Bestowing on men, with the god-gift of seeing, the godship of light!"

Then all died into silence; strangely too
Passed with it memory of the Titan's grief.
The wild interrogation of the years;
The shrill demand, "How long? How long?"; the thought
Of them that die with life their debtor still;
The fierce confronting of the soul with things
Treated in vain with show of disregard,
No more confounded me; to which strange peace
Such sweet remembrance came of common joys;
So brimmed my soul with longings for the touch
Of things but human, that when close at hand
One whispered in my ear, "You must be gone!"
I turned with glad consent and made my way
Forth from that place whereto with lagging feet
The mornings come unwelcomed. Soon my path
Skirted about a pool whose shores were strewn
With gray, bleached pebbles, and, descending, crossed
A wide, wan torrent bed where waters once

Had raged and boiled but now, with lichened arms
And twisted roots, gray stone-pines stood like men—
A shuddering few—from huge disaster saved;
And on, round cliffs that shouldered up through mist
From gulfs of troubled night whence faintly rose
Forlorn and lonely cries. But soon I left
Those hopeless wastes behind me where so long,
It seemed, my feet had stumbled, and found way
Through the warm glooms and whispering secrecies
Of valley-nestling woods.

Now as the will
Compels those thoughts at last to utterance
That haunt the spirit's darkness, so my gaze
Detached, and made distinct within the gloom,
Dim shapes and devious movements. Here hung lamps
Of wakening emerald; boulders there stood robed
In sombre blazonries, and pale, green flames
Ran in amongst the shadows and disclosed
In faint illumination tropic ferns,
Huge leaves with sleep adroop, fantastic blooms
Breathing a dead enchantment in the dusk,
And herbs, whose spotted stems ran sweat and dew,
Loading the air with drowsy essences
Through steaming hours of midnight.

Shod with sleep
Moved in amongst them gentle ministrants,
Invisible but sure and deft of hand,

Who quickened here, and there delayed, the lives
Awaiting call; or, mercifully kind,
Composed those others, irresponsive now
And dead to the throb and throe of all desire,
With cool, soft fingers on their lidded eyes,
Bringing them restful recompense, and sleep.
  This was a forest charged with wonderment,
And rich in all enchantment as are rich
All forests in the world; and here was hid,
As in all others, that mysterious fount
Of life whereof to drink men sought of old.
From out wild growths of creeper, shrub, and moss—
Hushed, warm and wet, mysteriously intent
On birth and increase—towered the wrinkled trunks
Of trees whose branches roofed invisibly
A dark enclose of steaming, amorous air
That thrilled to the kiss-like sounds of splitting buds,
And soft explosions showering secret bliss
On exigent desire; while tiny roots
Lay sucking softly, lapped about by joy,
Close to the earth's warm bosom. Here abode
Fruitful desire, insatiate appetite—
That hunger undivine and exquisite,
And thirst whose slaking is an ecstasy,
Which is the thing called life.

EPILOGUE

THE ARGUMENT

THE Pilgrim continues his descent and, hearing murmurs as of trees where no trees are, realizes that he has been drifting all night in his boat on the sea. Looking eastward he sees that the dawn is at hand, and before long the splendour of the new day breaks on the sleeping world.

Now come to sward
Spread out invisibly beneath the stars,
My ear still caught quick breaths, incessant sounds:
Shrill laughter, hurrying footfalls, silken flight—
A soft continuous whisper as of woods
Where no woods were—a murmur, like the sea's
Haunting at mournful ebb the weedy caves
Of tide-lorn headlands, filling all the night
With sense of ocean pavements hour-long paced
By spirits vexed with fruitless potency,
And winds and dragging mists; whereon, recalled
From dream to waking consciousness, I heard
The slide and slap and tiny bicker of waves
Against my boat's smooth sides, and saw again
The gray sea-glooms about me.
Overhead
The stars whose glittering spilth had all night long,
In little wavering pools of silver flame
Spattered the ocean floors, grown hectic bright,
Now paled in alien splendour welling up
Behind a crested mountain range that showed
Like to a long, low ridge of purple slag

And midnight wastage on the world's far edge,
Till in a soft diffuse of rayless light
Grew visible between its seaward crags,
Empurpled still by night, a winding gorge
Whose silence was as thunder stricken dumb
Mid-peal, and there—the butt of pitiless winds
And scorned for unsufficing martyrdom—
Prometheus chained! Even as I gazed the sons—
Bright troops enfranchised—of the morning star
About him crowding, struck from off his limbs
His fetters; lowered him gently from the rock,
And led him forth, and crowned his brow with youth;
And on his shoulders braced the glittering mail
Of Might and Mercy.
Then with loud acclaim,
Deepened by the hoarse thunder of the seas,
And the long roar of globe-encircling winds,
And joyful shrill of rain on seeded fields,
He issued forth in triumph from the gloom,
And soon, where I had looked to see the sun,
Attendant stood, hand raised and foot advanced,
Bright on the threshold of the wakening world.

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